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City Document—No. 58.

CITY OF BOSTON.



REPORT OF COMMITTEE
ON THE SUBJECT OF
NEW LUNATIC HOSPITAL.

In the Board of Mayor and Aldermen,

September 12, 1853.

Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

Attest: S. F. McCLEARY, JR., *City Clerk.*

CITY OF BOSTON.

In Board of Mayor and Aldermen,

January 26, 1853.

Ordered : That so much of the address of His Honor the Mayor as relates to the Boston Lunatic Hospital be referred to the Mayor and Alderman Whiting, with such as the Common Council may join to consider and report thereon.

Sent down for concurrence.

BENJAMIN SEAVER, *Mayor.*

In Common Council, January 27, 1853.

Concurred, and Messrs. Adams, Russell and Warren were joined.

HENRY J. GARDNER, *President.*

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CITY OF BOSTON.

In Board of Mayor and Aldermen,
Sept. 12, 1853.

The Joint Special Committee to whom was referred so much of the address of the Mayor, as relates to a new Hospital for the Insane, have given the subject the anxious attention which its importance demands, and now beg leave respectfully to

R E P O R T :

That they consider the question of any enlargement of the present Hospital at South Boston as settled, for no more provision can be made there to increase the capacity of the buildings. Under these circumstances, the Committee have come to the conclusion, to adopt the recommendation suggested in the address of the Mayor, viz: that it is expedient, and indeed the imperative duty of the City Council to erect a new Hospital building, in some convenient and eligible situation, in the neighborhood of the City, with sufficient land to give active employment for such of the male patients as may be able to labor. The Committee are informed that the experience of every month and every week shows the most painful necessity for *immediate extensive additional* accommodations for the insane. In a single day there have been as many as seven cases of applications for admission into the Hospital, all of which were refused, for want of room. The State Lunatic

Hospital at Worcester is full to overflowing, and the Trustees of that institution have lately been compelled to send back to us *ten* patients, who had been sent there by our City, and the Trustees intimated an intention of sending us *six* more. We are therefore deprived of any further resource in this way, and the Committee have reliable information that the new State Hospital at Taunton will be filled with patients, as soon as it is completed. The growth of our City and the excitement of the period in which we live seem rapidly to increase the number of cases of insanity, and call upon us in the most *imperative* manner to provide all the remedial means in our power for its amelioration and cure.

Many most painful cases might be mentioned, which have been pressed upon our attention, which have been refused admission altogether; and there is no reason to expect any diminution of such cases in the future. If the City had adequate means and accommodations for the reception of proper subjects for treatment, many of our fellow creatures might be restored to their reason, and become useful citizens, and thus many families be rendered comparatively happy.

The Committee cannot but think that any unnecessary delay in the prosecution of the object, will be an act of cruelty to many deserving persons, and they are confident that any judicious measures which the City Council may adopt to supply the existing pressing want for additional accommodations for the insane, will meet the cordial approbation of the people of Boston.

The Committee would particularly refer to the accompanying letter from the Hon. Charles Edward Cook, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Boston Lunatic Hospital in confirmation of their opinion.

In order to find some suitable site for a new Hospital a Sub-Committee was appointed to examine several lots of land which have been offered for this purpose,—that Committee will be ready to report in a few days, and it is recommended that the City Council visit the site which they may indicate when their report is presented.

For the Committee.

BENJAMIN SEAVER.

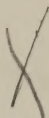
BOSTON, JULY 26, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR:

In answer to your note asking my “views and the facts” connected with the further accommodation for the insane to be cared for by our City, I would premise by saying that at the time of the erection of the present building at South Boston in 1839, there had not been sufficient development as to the effect of hospital treatment to remove the almost universal impression which then existed, that insanity was wholly an affection of the mind, curable only by omnipotent power, therefore so far as human agency was concerned, requiring not much else than the custodial confinement in Jails, Houses of Correction and Alms Houses of those suffering under the severest affliction to which humanity is heir. With these sentiments in common with those of our fellow citizens elsewhere, our then City Council erected the present building in its limited form for the accommodation of one hundred patients; more I must believe, as an auxiliary to the other institutions contiguous to it; more to relieve them of the care of this class of inmates, than with a belief that means could

be exercised for their care and restoration to health and usefulness. But thanks to that spirit of active benevolence, characteristic of our age, then springing up on this subject, the experiment has proved that insanity is an affection of the mind, in most cases caused by some departure from the organic laws to which our nature is subject, and is therefore as curable as any other disease, if proceeded with in its earliest stages, as exemplified in our large and well regulated hospitals. When we take into consideration the class of patients with which our institution at South Boston is filled, viz. those of whose past history and habits, little is known, besides what is procured from the officer through whose agency they were committed, our fellow citizens should feel encouraged to proceed in the good work thus begun by which so many poor and unfortunate beings have been relieved. From the first year of the occupation of this building (1840) to the present time there have been about eight hundred and fifty patients admitted, of which nearly one half have received the blessing sought, and have been discharged fully restored and prepared for the duties of life, others of the two hundred and fifty remaining at the present time we hope may be recipients of the like blessing. During the existence of the institution the deaths have been about two hundred. Encouraged by these facts the City government have from time to time, made the necessary provision for the enlarged usefulness of this noble charity by extending the capacity of the building until the limits of the ground upon which it stands deny any further progress; and the question must now arise, shall further action take place to meet the pressing wants of this part of our community, by the erection of another hospital in a location that will allow of all the improved appliances for the treatment

of this disease ; or is it best under all circumstances, to determine that the institution, as it now exists, shall so remain with the inevitable prospect of its soon becoming, what at the time of its erection it was supposed it might be, a mere auxiliary to the other institutions for those who could not be so well taken care of in their solitary cells and cages designed for criminals. The largest number which was intended to occupy the hospital at the time of its last enlargement was two hundred ; it now has two hundred and fifty-one, and has had nearly that number since November, 1851, since which time no patient has been admitted otherwise than as vacancies occurred by the recovery or death of others ; and this number has placed our hospital in so crowded a condition as to impair its means of usefulness very much ; in addition to these facts I would further remark that there is now at the House of Industry nine insane people, besides six others periodically so ; and five at the House of Correction, eking out their existence in the cages and cells of those institutions as of old, being the only provision there to be made for them ; I am also informed that others are similarly situated at the Jail and Deer Island. Upon inquiry of the Superintendent of the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester, Dr. Chandler, I find that there have been committed to that institution since January last from this City, twenty-five, all of whom by the laws of this Commonwealth, may be returned to our House of Correction and Jail, whenever the trustees of that institution shall decide that relief by the removal of patients is necessary. I have said that our present number is two hundred and fifty-one, and with our circumscribed limits the patients are almost wholly deprived of outdoor exercise, other than that enjoyed in the airing courts a few hundred feet square : this deprives the in-



stitution of the best remedial agencies known for the restoration of a diseased mind, and leads me to hope that the idea of those who have given the subject of the treatment of insanity much consideration, may be carried out by our City Government; viz., that of having a farm of fifty to one hundred acres attached to the hospital, whenever it may be changed from its present location.

I remain sir, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES EDWARD COOK.

To His Honor BENJAMIN SEAVER,
Mayor of City of Boston.

STATE LUNATIC HOSPITAL,

Worcester, Mass., Sept. 12, 1853.

Hon. B. SEAVER, Mayor, Boston.

DEAR SIR—After receiving your letter in regard to sending more of our patients to your institutions at South Boston, our Trustees were consulted. They are fully impressed that this Hospital must be relieved of its crowded condition, and they still think that those patients they had ordered to the House of Correction in your County, should be sent there.

I am desired by our Trustees to state to you our crowded condition, having 550 patients, with less than 400 rooms for them, and our almost daily reception of patients committed by the Courts.

Most respectfully,

Your ob't servant,

GEORGE CHANDLER, *Sup't.*